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REMARKS

Claims 1-22, and 24-26 remain active in this application. Claim 23 has been canceled. Claims 1, 7, 8, 10-12, and 17 have been amended herein. Claim 22 stands allowed.

Claims 7, 8, 10-12 and 17 have been amended to correct misspellings of "chlorotoluidines" and "bromotoluidines" as "cholortoluidines" and "bormotoluidines".

New Claims 24, 25 and 26 have been added. Support for these new claims can be found on page 4, lines 12-16 and in Example 6.

I. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-21 and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for being indefinite. Applicant respectfully requests reconsidering of this application in view of the amendments and remarks presented herewith.

Claims 1 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim subject matter which the applicant regards as the invention. Applicants gratefully acknowledge Examiner's comment that merely "contacting" a mixture with a base and then "introducing" said mixture to a distilling apparatus does not produce a separation. Applicants have therefore, as kindly suggested by Examiner, amended both claims 1 and 17 to specifically recite distilling the base-treated mixture. Support for this amendment can be found in the Specification on page 1, lines 22-25; page 4, lines 19-32, and also within Examples 1-6.

Dependent claims 2-16 and 18-21 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for being indefinite because they each depend on an indefinite claim. Claims 2-16 and 18-21 now depend on amended claims 1 and 17, which are no longer indefinite. Therefore, claims 2-16 and 18-21 are also no longer indefinite.

Dependent claim 23 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for being indefinite with respect to the limitation "polyhydric alcohol." Claim 23 has been canceled. Claims 24 and 25 are new claims dependent on claim 22 presented with proper antecedent basis for "polyhydric alcohol." Support for new claims 24 and 25 can be found on page 4, lines 12-16, and in Example 6.

None of the current pending claims are indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

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II. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10-12, 14 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by JP 08295654. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application in view of the amendments and remarks presented herewith.

JP 08295654 recites a typical acid-base extraction in which two layers are produced. JP 0895654 discloses contacting aniline with a dilute aqueous solution of a base in an extractive process which produces an aqueous layer and an oil layer. The aqueous layer and the oil layer are then separated and – “[t]he *oil layer* was distilled to give purified aniline,” (emphasis added).

In contrast, according to Applicants’ claimed process, there is no separation step – “the base-treated mixture” is introduced to the distillation apparatus and distilled. More specifically, Applicants’ claim states the following steps: “contacting a product mixture with a base ... to produce a base-treated mixture,” “introducing said base-treated mixture to a distillation apparatus,” and “distilling said base-treated mixture.” Thus, not only is no separation step required, it is also precluded since the base-treated mixture is introduced into a distillation apparatus and purified aromatic amine is distilled *from* the base-treated mixture. As pointed out by the Examiner, contacting the product mixture with a base does not in itself produce separation.

Even though Applicants’ claim uses the open-ended transitional term “comprising”, because Applicants specify it is the base-treated mixture that is distilled, Applicants’ claim cannot include a separation step prior to distilling the base-treated mixture, in contrast to JP 08295654. If a separation step in accordance with that disclosed in JP 08295654 was performed on Applicants’ base-treated mixture prior to distillation, then a different material, that is, *not* the base-treated mixture, would be distilled, which is inconsistent with Applicants’ claim.

Applicants’ claimed process has advantages over the process disclosed in JP 08295654, which requires a separation step and therefore, process equipment that is unnecessary in Applicants’ claimed process, namely, extractors and decanters. Further, unlike the process of JP 08295654, Applicants’ claimed process can be easily incorporated into an existing facility with minimal investment.

New dependent claims 24-26 further distinguish one particular class of embodiments of the present invention by further requiring the use of a polyhydric alcohol in the practice of

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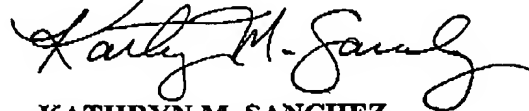
claim 1. JP 08295654 does not recite the use of a polyhydric alcohol in the separation process disclosed therein.

The claims as presented herein clearly distinguish the present invention from JP 08295654. The disclosure of JP 08295654 does not describe or anticipate the present claimed invention.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons and discussion, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections be withdrawn, and respectfully requests that a patent be issued on these claims. Should any questions arise, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's attorney at the number noted below.

Respectfully submitted,



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